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ABSTRACT

A study analyzed the likelihood and the meaning of a promotion among working women aged 37-48 in 1991. The study used data from the Young Women's cohort of the National Longitudinal Surveys (a sample of women who were aged 14-25 in 1968 and who have been interviewed regularly since that year). In 1991, the survey asked working women whether a promotion was received at their current or last job and about certain characteristics of the promotion, such as whether the promotion involved more pay, more challenging work, more authority over others, or more responsibility. Some of the findings of the study were the following: (1) nearly 14 percent of the women received a promotion within the preceding year; (2) women with at least a high school degree, women who work full time, women who work in large establishments, and women not employed in service occupations were more likely to receive a promotion than other women; (3) about 87 percent of women who were promoted received higher pay, and about 82 percent accepted more responsibility; and (4) nearly three-quarters of the promotions involved greater authority over other workers. (KC)

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Work and Family: Promotions Among Women

Data from the National Longitudinal Surveys

U.S. Department of Labor
Bureau of Labor Statistics

Report 868
March 1994

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This issue of *Work and Family* analyzes the likelihood and the meaning of a promotion among working women aged 37 to 48 in 1991. It is important to emphasize that the data in this report refer to women only. No comparable data are available for men and inferences regarding gender differentials in promotion cannot be made. Some of the more interesting findings include:

- Nearly 14 percent received a promotion within the past year.
- Women with at least a high school degree, women who work full time, women who work in large establishments, and women not employed in service occupations were more likely to receive a promotion than other women.
- About 87 percent of women who were promoted received higher pay, and about 82 percent accepted more responsibility.
- Nearly three-quarters of the promotions involved more challenging work, and about 54 percent involved greater authority over other workers.

Overview

For most workers, the conditions of employment such as wages, benefits, and work environment are extremely important aspects of a job. Also of importance is an individual's rank or position within an organization. For instance, in many firms there exists a well-established job hierarchy in which advancement takes the form of promotions to higher-level jobs, which is often considered part of the "structure" of an organization. Also, promotions are sometimes used by firms to motivate workers, particularly in companies where direct supervision of workers is difficult. A promotion is often a reward that results in advancement within the firm that provides access to higher pay and greater benefits, but also involves greater responsibility.

Due to data limitations, past research into the causes and consequences of promotions has focused primarily on federal workers, lawyers, and academics.[1] These studies generally examine gender differentials in promotion probabilities within these sectors. However, little is known about the internal labor market, promotion activity, and the consequences of promotion among groups of private sector workers.

This report uses data from the Young Women's cohort of the National Longitudinal Surveys. These data describe a sample of women who were between the ages of 14 and 25 in 1968 and who have been interviewed regularly since that year. In 1991, when the women were age 37 to 48, the survey asked questions to working women about whether a promotion was received at their current or last job and about certain characteristics of the promotion, such as whether the promotion involved more pay, more challenging work, more authority over others, or more responsibility.

Who is promoted?

Table 1 presents information on the likelihood of a promotion among working women by a number of characteristics, including race, marital status, education level, employment status, establishment size, and occupation. Data on whether a promotion was received within the past year are provided.

Nearly 14 percent of working women were promoted within the past year. There were virtually no differences in promotion probabilities by race and only small differences by marital status, with single women slightly more likely to be promoted than married women.

While there appears to be an association between education level and the likelihood of a promotion, this relationship is not completely consistent, as college graduates were slightly less likely to receive a promotion than high school graduates and those with some college (13-15 years of education). However, high school dropouts were less likely to be promoted than any other education group.

Those who worked full time were about twice as likely to be promoted as those who worked part time. This may occur because full-time workers are more attached to a particular job and are more likely to receive both formal and informal on-the-job training than part-time workers.

The number of employees at the plant or office where an individual works should be related to the likelihood of a promotion since for a promotion to occur, usually an opening must exist at a higher level position. At larger estab-

[1] See Ivy E. Broder, "Professional Achievements and Gender Differences Among Academic Economists," *Economic Inquiry*, Vol. 41, No. 1, 1993, pp. 116-127; Mark R. Killingsworth and Cordelia W. Reimers, "Race, Ranking, Promotions, and Pay at a Federal Facility: A Logit Analysis," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 1983, pp. 92-107; David N. Laband and Bernard F. Lentz, "Is There Sex Discrimination in the Legal Profession?," *Journal of Human Resources*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 1993, pp. 230-258.

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Table 1. Percent of working women age 37-48 in 1991 who received a job promotion within the past year.

Characteristics	Percent promoted
Total	13.9
Race	
White	13.9
Black or other	13.7
Marital status	
Married	13.6
Single	14.5
Education	
High school dropout	10.9
High school graduate	14.7
Some college	14.6
College graduate	13.3
Employment status	
Full time	15.6
Part time	8.5
Number employed at plant or office	
Less than 10	11.2
10-24	14.4
25-99	13.5
100-499	17.2
Greater than or equal to 500	16.5
Occupation	
Professional, technical	13.9
Manager	20.6
Clerical, sales	13.3
Craft worker, blue-collar supervisor, laborer	13.2
Service	9.4

Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Young Women

lishments, there tends to be more hierarchy which may be associated with more promotion possibilities. The data provide some evidence for this notion, as those women employed in firms with 100-499 employees were the most likely to be promoted, and those employed in firms with fewer than 10 employees were the least likely. There are only small differences in promotion probability between those employed at establishments with 100-499 employees and those employed at establishments with 500 or more employees, suggesting that the probability of promotion does not increase directly with the number of employees at the workplace, particularly among larger establishments.

There also are strong differences in the probability of promotion by occupation. In particular, managers were the most likely to have been promoted, which might be expected (Many of these women may have been promoted to manager.) Those employed in a service occupation were the least likely to be promoted, as less than 10 percent were promoted within the past year.

What is a promotion?

Table 2 presents information on various qualitative aspects of a promotion for those women who were promoted. These characteristics include: More pay, more challenging work, more authority over other workers, and more responsibility over others.

More pay. For about 9 out of 10 women who were promoted, the promotion involved an increase in pay. A pay raise associated with a promotion was slightly more likely to occur among nonwhite women than white women, and substantially more likely to occur among those employed full time than those who worked part time. Those employed in a service job were less likely to receive more pay as part of the promotion than those employed in other occupations.

More challenging work. About three-fourths of those women who were promoted undertook more challenging work due to their promotion. Surprisingly, college graduates were less likely to assume more challenging work along with their promotion than those with less education.

Managers experienced more challenging work when they were promoted than women employed in other occupations. Because many of these women may have been promoted to manager, this finding might suggest that there are increased job rigors associated with becoming a manager. In contrast, those employed in clerical and sales occupations were less likely to undertake more challenging work due to their promotion.

More authority over other workers. About 54 percent of

Table 2. Characteristics of a promotion among women age 37-48 in 1991 who received a job promotion within the past year (in percent)

Characteristics	More pay	More challenging work	More authority over other workers	More responsibility
Total	87.4	73.0	54.0	81.8
Race				
White	87.0	73.6	54.6	82.6
Black or other	90.1	69.0	49.8	76.2
Marital status				
Married	88.4	71.6	54.1	80.8
Single	85.4	75.8	53.6	83.8
Education				
High school dropout	79.1	74.9	46.8	82.4
High school graduate	89.9	78.4	50.8	83.3
Some college	79.3	76.1	62.8	87.8
College graduate	93.5	59.8	54.2	73.3
Employment status				
Full time	89.0	73.1	56.3	82.9
Part time	77.9	72.4	40.1	75.5
Number employed at plant or office				
Less than 10	87.8	71.5	54.4	81.3
10-24	86.1	73.1	54.8	82.6
25-99	88.9	73.0	53.6	78.7
100-499	83.6	76.6	55.9	84.5
Greater than or equal to 500	92.5	69.4	48.7	83.3
Occupation				
Professional, technical	85.5	75.9	60.4	84.3
Manager	93.7	80.3	81.5	93.8
Clerical, sales	86.7	66.6	41.0	74.7
Craft worker, blue-collar supervisor, laborer	92.1	73.6	41.2	73.5
Service	76.3	74.2	43.3	87.7

Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Young Women

women who were promoted reported having more authority over other workers as part of their promotion. White women were somewhat more likely to receive greater authority than nonwhite women. Those employed full time were much more likely to receive greater authority over others than part-time workers, and managers who had been promoted were likely to have more authority over others than those employed in other occupations.

More responsibility. About 82 percent of promoted women received greater responsibility as part of their promotion. Whites were more likely to receive greater responsibility due to the promotion than nonwhites. Surprisingly, college graduates were less likely than others to experience greater responsibility. Women employed full time and managers were more likely to receive an increase in responsibility due to their promotion.

Summary. A promotion generally means more pay and increased responsibility. For most women, a promotion gives them more challenging work, but only a slight majority get more authority over other workers.

Technical Note

Data in this report are from the National Longitudinal Surveys (NLS) which are sponsored by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The Bureau contracts with the Center for Human Resource Research of The Ohio State University to manage the surveys and provide user services. The NLS were begun in the mid-1960's with the drawing of four samples: Young Men who were 14-24 years old as of April 1, 1966, Young Women who were 14-24 years old as of January 1, 1968, Older Men who were 45-59 years old as of April 1, 1966, and Mature Women who were 30-44 years old as of April 1, 1967. Each sample originally had about 5,000 individuals with oversamples of blacks. In the early 1980's, the Young Men and Older Men surveys were discontinued. The two women's surveys continue and are currently collected every 2 years. The Bureau of the Census collects the data for BLS.

In 1979, a new cohort was begun with a sample of over 12,000 young men and women who were 14-21 years of age as of January 1, 1979. It includes oversamples of blacks, Hispanics, economically disadvantaged whites, and youth in the military. The military oversample was discontinued after the 1984 survey, and the economically disadvantaged white oversample was discontinued after the 1990 survey. This survey is called the Youth cohort, and the cohort members have been interviewed every year since it began. The data collection for the Youth cohort is undertaken by NORC (National Opinion Research Center), a social science research center affiliated with the University of Chicago.

The data in this report are weighted so that the sample is representative of the age group studied. The sample includes those individuals who worked between the 1988 and 1991 interviews and respondents in 1991. Estimates use the 1991 sampling weight. All inferences that are discussed in the text are statistically significant at the 90-percent confidence level. Due to sampling variability, small differences that are not discussed in the text should be interpreted with caution.

For a detailed explanation of the NLS, see *NLS Handbook 1993* (Center for Human Resource Research, The Ohio State University). For information about the NLS, or to be placed on a mailing list for this publication, write to National Longitudinal Surveys, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Office of Research and Evaluation, 2 Massachusetts Ave., NE, Room 4915, Washington, DC 20212-0001, call (202) 606-7405, or Internet JAIN_R@ORE.PSB.BLS.GOV.

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